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# Racial Minority Women

## INTRODUCTION

**T**he combined issues of racism and sexism are barriers most likely to affect racial minority women. In the workplace, racial minority women are often judged by their color and race rather than their experience or capabilities. This profile discusses some of the social and economic issues affecting the employment status of racial minority women in Ontario's labour force. Information about labour force participation, occupational representation, education and earnings of racial minority women are included as well as employment barriers and suggested remedial measures.

Racism exists when individuals, because of their race, are: i) denied access to services or oppressed; ii) excluded from decision-making processes; iii) treated differently and negatively; iv) described or depicted as inferior; v) affected negatively by policies, programs and practices; and vi) subjected to direct or indirect harassment. (For an explanation of some of the terms used in this profile, see the Glossary of Terms, page 7).

The term racial minority refers to people of color who are visibly different from the dominant group and who are non-white or non-Caucasian in race. For the purpose of this document, the term racial minority will include the term visible minority, defined as "persons who are, because of their race or color, a visible minority in Canada."<sup>1</sup>

Data for this profile came from a variety of sources. The primary sources were the 1986 Statistics Canada Census and the Ministry of Citizenship Ethnocultural Data Base.\* Wherever possible, data are included to compare racial minority women and men, as well as racial minorities and the rest of the population. These comparisons are not intended to create an ideal model for racial

minority women. They are intended to compare the social and economic status of racial minority women with the rest of Ontario's labour force.

## WOMEN IN ONTARIO'S LABOUR FORCE

**W**omen make up 51 per cent of Ontario's population. In 1986, there were 4,633,900 women in Ontario and 4,467,795 men.<sup>2</sup> Although women have always participated in the paid labour force, an unprecedented number have joined the workforce in recent years. In 1975, for example, only 48 per cent of all women over age 15 were working outside the home. By 1986, 59 per cent of all women over 15 had joined the paid workforce.<sup>3</sup>

If current trends continue, by the year 2000, women are expected to total 50 per cent of the labour force. Also, Ontario's diverse population, with men and women from over 100 ethnic and racial backgrounds, is now being reflected in the workplace.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the strong participation of women in the labour force, there are still many barriers to women's equality in the workplace. Employment barriers have caused women to be concentrated in a narrow range of occupations, such as clerical, retail sales and service jobs, which contribute to their lower earnings. In 1986, women earned on average 65 cents to every dollar earned by a man. Bridging this wage gap has been very slow. Income data indicate that women in Ontario in 1989 "earned on average 67 per cent of men's earnings."<sup>5</sup> In other words, for every dollar a man earned, a woman working the same number of hours earned 67 cents.

## WOMEN IN THE LABOUR MARKET



Ontario  
Women's  
Directorate

\* The Ethnocultural Data Base uses visible minority instead of racial minority and non-visible minority for the rest of the population.

RACIAL  
MINORITY  
WOMEN ARE  
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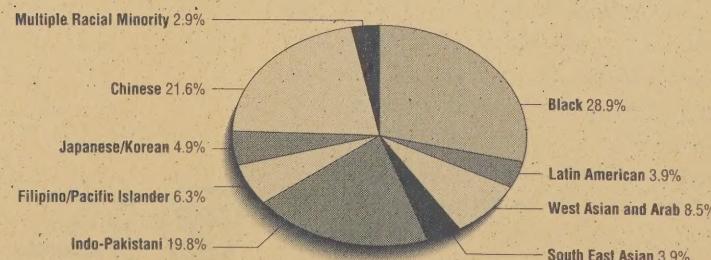
## RACIAL MINORITY WOMEN

Racial minority women are not a uniform group. They come from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds. "In 1986, approximately 30 per cent of Ontarians who belonged to a racial minority group were Canadian-born,"<sup>6</sup> while the remaining 70 per cent were born outside Canada in places like Asia, the Caribbean, and South East Asia. Many racial minority women speak English as a second language. Their traditional native languages include Amharic, Spanish, Somali, Vietnamese, Laotian, Cambodian, Hindi, Punjabi, and others.

The 1986 Statistics Canada Census showed that 69 per cent of Ontario's racial minority residents were between age 15 and 64. Less than five per cent are over 65 compared with 11 per cent for the rest of Ontario's population. These statistics show that, as a group, racial minorities are younger than most of Ontario's population.<sup>7</sup>

In 1986, 49 per cent, or 775,250, of Canada's racial minority population lived in Ontario, accounting for nine per cent of the province's population.<sup>8</sup> Blacks and people of Asian origins, such as Chinese, Filipinos and South East Asians, form the largest number of racial minorities in Ontario. The following chart shows the population composition of Ontario's racial minority groups.

### Composition of Racial Minority Population, Ontario 1986



Source: Statistics Canada, 1986 Census of Canada

## RACIAL MINORITY WOMEN—LABOUR FORCE PROFILE

The data presented in the following statistical tables show a pattern of low earnings, high unemployment and occupational segregation for racial minority women. "As a result, the central issues for visible minority women, as they relate to full and equal participation in the Ontario labour force, are the added barriers of racial and sexual discrimination."<sup>9</sup>

Despite these barriers, the labour force participation rate for racial minority women is slightly higher than for women as a group. Their higher participation rate may be due to harsh economic realities which require a greater number of racial minority women to seek paid work. Tables 1 and 2 compare the labour force composition and participation rates of racial minority women and men with the rest of the population.

Table 1:  
Ontario Labour Force Composition 1986

	In the Labour force (in the labour force)	Composition rate (%)
Total population of Ontario	4,795	
Men	2,701	56
Women	2,094	44
Racial minorities	403	
Men	215	4.5
Women	199	4.0
Rest of the population	4,392	
Men	2,487	52.0
Women	1,905	40.0

Source: 1986 Census, Statistics Canada. Distributed by: Ministry of Citizenship Ethnocultural Data Base (Table P346277)

Table 1 shows that racial minorities totalled approximately 8.5 per cent of Ontario's labour force in 1986. Also, the percentage of racial minority men and women in the labour force was relatively close: 53 per cent for men and 47 per cent for women.\*

Although racial minority women have a higher labour force participation rate (80 per cent) than the total female population, Table 3 shows that job ghettoization and occupational segregation are a problem. Racial minority women are under-represented in middle and upper-level management positions, over-represented in the manual field, and, like women as a group, are heavily concentrated in the clerical field.

Racial and sexual discrimination have also influenced earning differences. There is a noticeable difference between the income of racial minority women, and men and women in the rest of the population.

Income and employment differences are particularly important to note, given the educational skills of racial minority women. "The skill levels of minorities vary, but the number with higher qualifications is above average."<sup>10</sup> For example, in 1986, 18.5 per cent of racial minority women in Ontario's labour market had a university degree, compared with 13 per cent of Ontario women in the rest of the population.

Over 14 per cent of racial minority women who are clerical workers have university degrees compared with four per cent of women in the rest of Ontario's population. This shows how systemic discrimination in employment can present barriers to opportunity for racial minority women. Twenty per cent of racial minority male clerical workers have degrees compared with only seven per cent of the rest of the population. Table 5 shows the percentage of workers by occupation with a bachelor degree or higher.

Table 2:  
Unemployment and Participation Rates 1986

	In the Labour Force (thousands)	Unemployment Rate (%)	Participation Rate (%)
Total population of Ontario	4,795	6.2	75
Men	2,701	5.4	83
Women	2,094	7.2	68
Racial minorities	403	6.4	84
Men	215	6.1	89
Women	189	6.9	80
Rest of the population	4,392	6.1	75
Men	2,487	5.3	82
Women	1,905	7.1	67

Source: 1986 Census, Statistics Canada. Distributed by: Ministry of Citizenship Ethnocultural Data Base.

Table 3:  
Occupational Distribution: Ontario 1986 Census

Occupational category	Racial minority (%)		Rest of population (%)	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Upper management	1.6	0.4	2.6	0.7
Middle management	6.7	3.8	8.6	5.8
Professional	13.9	13.4	10.6	14.2
Semi-prof. and technicians	4.6	5.0	4.1	5.1
Supervisory	2.7	2.8	2.3	2.9
Foremen/forewomen	2.4	0.5	4.2	0.5
Clerical	9.3	30.0	6.7	31.4
Sales	6.1	6.0	7.2	8.6
Service	10.3	11.8	6.4	12.0
Skilled crafts and trades	7.8	1.1	11.5	1.1
Semi-skilled manual	10.5	2.5	13.5	3.1
Other manual	19.5	17.7	18.8	11.0
Occupation not stated	4.6	5.0	3.5	3.6
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100.</b>	<b>100.</b>	<b>100.</b>	<b>100.</b>

\*The percentages were reached by dividing the number of racial minority women (and racial minority men) by the total racial minority population in the labour force and multiplying by 100.

Source: 1986 Census, Statistics Canada (Ministry of Citizenship, *Ontario: A Diverse and Changing Society*, Ethnocultural Data Base Materials - Series III, Special Report, #5).

Table 4: Average Income By Occupation

Ontario 1986 Census (Full-time/full-year workers age 15+)

Occupational category	(\$)		Rest of the population	
	Racial Minorities	Men	Men	Women
	Men	Women		
All occupations	28,055	19,187	32,176	20,550
Upper management	48,814	33,880	63,898	35,366
Middle management	32,166	24,721	39,603	25,254
Professional	42,217	28,624	43,876	29,220
Semi-prof. and technicians	28,793	20,752	31,226	21,477
Supervisory	23,942	18,823	30,596	19,502
Foremen/forewomen	28,399	17,108	32,346	19,623
Clerical	22,483	18,512	24,483	18,114
Sales	25,357	16,765	30,808	18,050
Service	16,590	12,262	24,882	13,229
Skilled crafts and trades	26,836	16,259	27,683	17,037
Semi-skilled manual	23,945	15,717	25,853	17,009
Other manual	20,788	13,595	24,337	15,666
Other occupations	23,132	18,127	24,994	18,015

Source: 1986 Census, Statistics Canada. Distributed by: Ministry of Citizenship Ethnocultural Data Base.

Table 5. University Graduates By Occupation: Ontario 1986 Census

Occupational groups	(%)		Rest of the population	
	Racial minorities	Men	Men	Women
	Men	Women		
All occupations	27	18	16	13
Upper management	55	36	36	32
Middle management	37	29	25	20
Professional	75	46	64	46
Semi-prof. and technicians	31	27	16	17
Supervisory	21	14	10	6
Foremen/forewomen	13	8	3	4
Clerical	20	14	7	4
Sales	25	15	13	8
Service	7	4	3	2
Skilled crafts and trades	8	5	1	3
Semi-skilled manual	8	11	1	4
Other manual	6	3	1	0.5

Source: 1986 Census, Statistics Canada. Distributed by: Ministry of Citizenship Ethnocultural Data Base.

Tables 4 and 5 show that even in occupations where women and men have similar education levels, men's earnings far exceed women's. For example, although 36 per cent of racial minority women and 36 per cent of men in the rest of the population in upper-level management are university graduates, men earn approximately 53 per cent more than racial minority women. Similarly, when earnings of racial minority women are compared with racial minority men in upper-level management, there is a notable earning difference of 44 per cent. The earning difference between racial minority women and women in the rest of the population in upper-level management is four per cent.

Similar patterns of earning differences between racial minority women and men with university degrees are evident in clerical, sales and semi-skilled manual fields. In the clerical field, where 14 per cent of racial minority women and seven per cent of men in the general population have university degrees, racial minority women earn approximately 32 per cent less.

The statistical data in this profile give a picture of the labour market status of racial minority women. Some of the factors which have contributed to the disadvantaged employment status of racial minority women suggest the existence of systemic and racial discrimination.

*Who Gets the Work: A Test of Racial Discrimination in Employment*, a study by the Urban Alliance on Race Relations and the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, 1985, reported: "the results of this study clearly show there is substantial racial discrimination affecting the ability of racial minority groups to find employment."<sup>11</sup>

## EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS

The employment barriers experienced by racial minority women may be caused by intentional or systemic discrimination. Systemic discrimination refers to employment policies and practices that seem neutral but have a negative impact. Essentially, these policies and practices operate to exclude racial minorities and other designated groups for reasons that are not job-related. Examples of systemic discrimination include credentialism, the requirement for "Canadian experience," or excessive employment or academic qualifications that are not required for the job.

Credentialism is a barrier to job entry for foreign-trained racial minority women who are both qualified and skilled to work in a wide range of professions and trades. *Access! The Task Force on Access to Professions and Trades in Ontario* (Ministry of Citizenship, 1989), noted a number of employment obstacles including the lack of appropriate means to assess professional qualifications received in other countries.

Not recognizing and accepting certificates, degrees, and foreign work experience results in a form of systemic discrimination which has a negative impact on racial minority women. "Difficulty obtaining an accurate assessment of prior learning for certification is the problem cited most frequently by foreign-trained people, community organizations, and ethno-cultural associations."<sup>12</sup>

Systemic discrimination in the recruitment and selection process can involve the personal biases of recruiters, including:

- misinterpreting different communication styles and body language (e.g., assuming that an applicant's failure to maintain "eye contact" is a sign of dishonesty).

These practices result in the rejection of the applicant at the job search or interview phase. In rejecting applicants, recruiters sometimes say: "you are over-qualified for the job"; "the position was cancelled or filled internally"; "we have no opening for your skills"; "we found someone more suitable"; or "your resume was never received."<sup>13</sup>

The employment recruitment system is filled with obstacles which limit the entry and promotion of racial minorities. A 1988 Survey on Employment Discrimination in Canada by the Canadian Recruiters Guild showed that: "97 per cent of those surveyed said they had discriminated against job seekers on the basis of handicap, 95 per cent on age, 94 per cent on colour, and 81 per cent on sex."<sup>14</sup>

The group surveyed consisted of 672 recruiters across Canada including: 478 corporate personnel recruiters, 135 corporate hiring managers, 48 agency recruiters and others. Those surveyed included a cross section of private and public sector organizations. The survey also found that most corporate recruiters (87 per cent) had received and complied with direct racist and discriminatory requests.<sup>15</sup>

Racial minority women often face racism as well as sexism in the workforce. In addition to this, racial minority women experience a wide range of barriers that negatively affect all women in the workplace. These barriers include lack of adequate child care, limited access to training and development, and biased treatment which can damage career advancement. These barriers are particularly damaging to the working lives of racial minority women. Consequently, racial minority women experience the double disadvantages resulting from gender and racial discrimination.

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## ELIMINATING EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS

### EMPLOYMENT EQUITY IS A RESULTS- ORIENTED PROGRAM.

Implementing an effective employment equity program can help organizations eliminate workplace barriers against racial minority women. "Visible minority women consider employment equity to be a major priority because of its potential to eliminate overt and systemic discrimination."<sup>16</sup>

Employment equity is a results-oriented program which includes removing discriminatory barriers and taking special measures to ensure equality of opportunity in the workplace. Applying employment equity principles in the workplace would allow racial minority women and other designated groups to more fully use their educational skills and employment experience. Earning differences would also be corrected.

Employment equity can also help increase the number of racial minority women and other designated groups in the workplace. Organizations can help improve the employment and workplace experience of racial minority women by:

- analysing recruitment, selection, training and promotion policies and practices, and personnel systems to identify and remove any barriers against racial minority women;
- providing training to address employees' fears and concerns about hiring people of different racial backgrounds;
- creating a workplace that is free from all forms of discrimination including sexual and racial harassment;
- involving employees in the implementation of an employment equity program.

To ensure that the workplace is representative of Ontario's changing and diverse population, organizations can expand their labour pool through outreach recruitment. Various ethnic/racial media and organizations can be useful sources to recruit racial

minority women. Organizations can also take these steps to help ensure success in recruiting racial minority women:

- train managers and others involved in hiring in bias-free recruitment and selection practices;
- ensure that job requirements focus on work-related skills and qualifications;
- ensure that job selection interviews are culturally sensitive and that, wherever possible, the selection team includes racial minorities who support and have knowledge of employment equity initiatives;
- provide employee orientation sessions to new employees to inform them of the organization's culture and expectations;
- extend training and development and promotion opportunities to racial minority women.

Racial minority women, like all women, bring a broad range of skills and qualifications to the workplace. Tapping this valuable pool of talent benefits racial minority women, the organizations which employ them, and the economy of Ontario. Employment equity can help to make this happen.

### ENDNOTES:

1. Employment Equity Act, Queen's Printer for Canada, Ottawa, June 1986.
2. Ontario Women's Directorate, *INFOFLASH #1, Basic Facts: A Fact Sheet on Women in Ontario*, Toronto, September 1990, p. 1.
3. Ibid, pp. 3-4.
4. Ministry of Citizenship, *Ontario: A Diverse and Changing Society*, Ethnocultural Data Base Materials - Series III, Special Report No. 5, Toronto, 1991, p. 4.

5. Ontario Women's Directorate, *INFOFLASH #3, Income*, Toronto, March 1992, p. 2.
6. Ministry of Citizenship, Op. cit., p. 6.
7. Ministry of Citizenship Ethnocultural Data Base/Statistics Canada 1986 Census.
8. Ministry of Citizenship, *Ontario: A Diverse and Changing Society, Ethnocultural Data Base Materials - Series III, Special Report No. 5*, Toronto, 1991, p. 6.
9. Urban Alliance on Race Relations, *Currents*, Vol. No. 3, Summer 1987, Toronto, p. 16.
10. Urban Alliance on Race Relations, *Currents*, Vol. 5, No. 4, Toronto, March 1990, p. 16.
11. Urban Alliance on Race Relations and the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, *Who Gets the Work: A Test of Racial Discrimination in Employment*, Toronto, 1985, p. 53.
12. Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, *Access! Task Force on Access to Professions and Trades in Ontario*, Queen's Printer for Ontario, 1989, p. xii.
13. Canadian Recruiters Guild, *A Survey on Employment Discrimination in Canada*, Ottawa, 1988.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Op. cit., *Currents*, Summer 1987, p. 17.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS\*

### Credentialism

The use of job requirements, such as diplomas, university degrees, training certificates, and other forms not justified by the requirements of the job.

### Designated groups

Those groups (e.g., women, racial minorities, persons with disabilities, Aboriginal persons) who are the focus of employment equity because their labour market history reveals high rates of unemployment, lower than average pay rates, and concentration in a narrow range of occupations (e.g., clerical, sales and service).

### Employment equity

A comprehensive planning process used by an organization to ensure fair and equitable representation of designated groups at all levels of the organization.

### Ethnic origin

The ethnic or cultural group(s) Canadians belong to, or identify with, and the ancestral roots or origins of the population.

### Labour force

That portion of the population 15 years of age and over who are employed or actively seeking employment.

### Labour force participation rate

Represents the labour force as a percentage of the population 15 years of age and over. The participation rate for a particular group is that group's labour force expressed as a percentage of its population.

### Native language

The language first learned in childhood and still understood.

## LIST OF RESOURCE ORGANIZATIONS

### Canada Employment Centre

(see the blue pages of Bell Canada's telephone directory for listings of local addresses)

### Ethnocultural Data Base Office

Ministry of Citizenship  
77 Bloor Street West  
5th Floor  
Toronto, Ontario  
M7A 2R9  
(416) 314-7300

### Ontario Anti-Racism Secretariat

77 Bloor Street West  
20th Floor  
Toronto, Ontario  
M7A 2R9  
(416) 326-9702

### Ontario Women's Directorate

2 Carlton Street  
12th Floor  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5B 2M9  
(416) 314-0300

### Urban Alliance on Race Relations

675 King Street West  
Suite 203  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5V 1M9  
(416) 363-2607

### Racial discrimination

Generally an overt act such as denying an individual employment, housing, accommodation or other services.

### Racial minority

Refers to persons who are visibly different from the dominant group and are non-white and/or non-Caucasian in race. The term visible minority is also used and is defined as "persons who are, because of their race or colour, a visible minority in Canada." Racial minorities include the following groups: Black, Chinese, Indo-Pakistani, Japanese, Korean, Latin American, Pacific Islander, South Asian, West Asian and Arab.

### Racism

A system of erroneous beliefs, assumptions and actions based upon an ideology of superiority of one racial or ethnic group over another. This results in one group of people exercising abusive power over another group on the basis of skin color and racial heritage. Racism is found within the structures and programs of organizations and institutions or within individual thoughts and behaviors.

### Systemic discrimination

The act of excluding members of certain groups by using employment policies or practices based on criteria that are not job-related nor required for the efficient running of the business. Systemic discrimination prevents equality of opportunity for minority groups.

### Workforce

Employees within an organization, as opposed to the "labour force," consisting of workers in the general population.

\*This glossary of terms was excerpted from:

*Affirmative Action: Technical Training Manual*, Employment and Immigration Canada, Supply and Services Canada, Ottawa, 1985.

*Glossary of Anti-Racism Terms and Concepts*, Ontario Anti-Racism Secretariat, Ministry of Citizenship, Toronto, 1992, and

*Ontario: A Diverse and Changing Society*, Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Toronto, 1991.

### For more information contact:

Ontario Women's Directorate  
Consultative Services Branch  
(416) 314-0300.

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# Aboriginal Women

## INTRODUCTION

This profile discusses some socioeconomic factors influencing the employment status of Aboriginal women in Ontario's labour force. Information about the labour force participation, occupational representation, education and earnings of Aboriginal women are included in this profile. The employment barriers that Aboriginal women face and suggested corrective measures are also included.

Aboriginal people are persons who consider themselves to be Aboriginal persons (or Native Indians of North America), including status Indians, non-status Indians, Metis and Inuit.<sup>1</sup> The term "Aboriginal" is used interchangeably with the term "Native" person or people. (For an explanation of some of the terms used in this profile, see the Glossary of Terms, page 7.)

Data for this profile came from a variety of sources. The primary sources for this data were the 1986 census of Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship's Ethnocultural Data Base. Wherever possible, data is included to compare Aboriginal women and men, as well as Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal men and women. Data is used to compare the social and economic status of these groups in Ontario's labour force only and is not intended to create an ideal model for Aboriginal women.

It is important to note that not all Aboriginal communities participated in the 1986 census. This has affected the range of data in this profile. Approximately 12,000 Aboriginal people in Ontario were not registered in the 1986 census.<sup>2</sup> Also, census data may not have fully reflected the number of non-status Indians and Metis who live off-reserve. Despite these limitations, the statistics

included in this profile provide a good indication of the employment status of Aboriginal women in Ontario's labour force.

## WOMEN IN ONTARIO'S LABOUR FORCE

Women make up 51 per cent of Ontario's population. In 1986, there were 4,633,900 women in Ontario and 4,467,795 men.<sup>3</sup> Women have always participated in the paid labour force. This is also true for women who have faced historic economic disadvantage. A surprising number of women have joined the workforce in recent years.

In 1975, for example, only 48 per cent of all women over age 15 were working outside the home. By 1986, the percentage of women over 15 who were working had reached 59 per cent.<sup>4</sup>

If current trends continue, by the year 2000, women are expected to total 50 per cent of the labour force. Also, Ontario's diverse population, with men and women from over 100 ethnic and racial backgrounds, is being reflected in the workplace.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the strong participation of women in the labour force, there are still many barriers to women's equality in the workplace. Employment barriers have caused women to be concentrated in a narrow range of occupations, such as clerical, retail sales and service jobs, which contribute to their lower earnings. In 1986, women earned, on average, 65 cents to every dollar earned by a man. Bridging this wage gap has been very slow. Income data show that in 1989, "women in Ontario earned on average 67 per cent of men's earnings."<sup>6</sup> In other words, for every dollar a man earned, a woman working the same number of hours earned 67 cents.

## WOMEN IN THE LABOUR MARKET



Ontario  
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## ABORIGINAL WOMEN

LIKE OTHER  
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Like other designated group women, Aboriginal women are not a uniform group. They come from different Aboriginal cultures and speak languages such as Ojibwa and Cree. However, almost all Aboriginal people living in Ontario speak one of Canada's two official languages and over 80 per cent of those surveyed in the 1986 census reported English as their first language.<sup>7</sup>

Aboriginal people live in various First Nations communities in Ontario, including Brantford, Cornwall and Thunder Bay. No matter where they live, Aboriginal people have a unique cultural, historical, political and constitutional place in Canada.

According to data from the 1986 census, Aboriginal people total 167,375 or two per cent of Ontario's population. Of this number, 86,400 or 51 per cent are women.<sup>8</sup> Aboriginal women form one per cent of Ontario's female population.<sup>9</sup> Ontario's Aboriginal peoples include persons with single and multiple Aboriginal origins (e.g.,

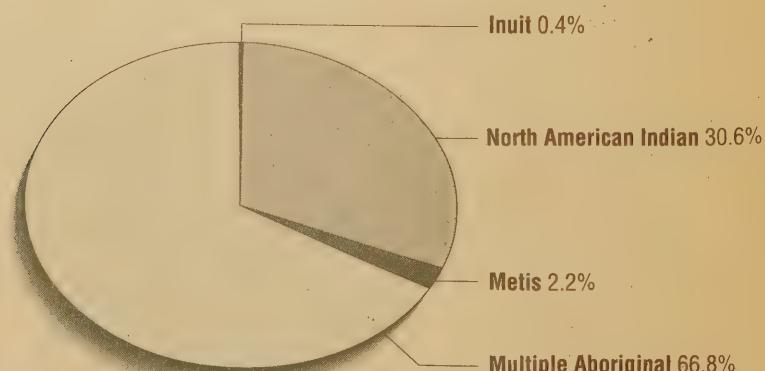
Cree and Mohawk). Multiple origins also include people with an Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage (e.g., Cree and British). "In 1986, two-thirds of Ontario's Aboriginal Peoples reported a multiple Aboriginal origin."<sup>10</sup>

The Aboriginal population has more youth and fewer seniors than the non-Aboriginal population. More than half of all Aboriginal peoples are under 24 years of age, compared with 37 per cent of non-Aboriginal people. Only 2.5 per cent are 65 and over compared with 10 per cent of Ontario's population.<sup>11</sup> Aboriginal males and females are equally distributed in different age groups, except in the over 65 age group where there are more Aboriginal women (54 per cent versus 46 per cent).<sup>12</sup>

Ontario's Aboriginal population is expected to increase in size by 40 per cent by the year 2011.<sup>13</sup> A higher birth rate, a decrease in infant mortality, and increased longevity are the reasons for this projected population increase.

The following chart shows the make up of the Aboriginal population of Ontario.

Composition of Aboriginal Population Ontario 1986



As a group, Aboriginal women have faced many disadvantages, from gender discrimination to economic and social hardships. For women living in remote northern towns, the disadvantages can be multiplied by limited access to job opportunities and training programs. While more opportunities exist in urban areas, cultural barriers (e.g., language) can prevent Aboriginal women from taking advantage of them. Tables 1 and 2 show the labour force make up and participation rate of Aboriginal women compared with non-Aboriginal men and women in Ontario's labour force in 1986.

## LABOUR FORCE PROFILE 1986

Table 1:  
Ontario's Labour Force Composition 1986

	Labour Force	Composition Rate (%)
Ontario	4,922,240	
Men	2,752,455	56.0
Women	2,169,790	44.0
Aboriginal	74,960	1.5
Men	40,195	0.8
Women	34,760	0.7

Source: 1986 Census, Statistics Canada. Distributed by: Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Ethnocultural Data Base.

The data in table one shows that Aboriginal peoples totalled 1.5 per cent of Ontario's labour force in 1986.

Table 2:  
Unemployment and Participation Rates 1985/86

	Labour Force	Unemployment Rate (%)	Participation Rate (%)
Ontario	4,922,240	6	69
Men	2,752,455	5	79
Women	2,169,790	8	59
Aboriginal	74,960	14	68
Men	40,195	13	78
Women	34,760	15	59

Source: 1986 Census, Statistics Canada. Distributed by: Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Ethnocultural Data Base.

The participation rate is the percentage of the population 15 years of age and older who are employed or seeking employment. In 1986, the number of Aboriginal people in Ontario 15 and over was 109,540. Of this number, there were 51,455 Aboriginal men and 58,085 Aboriginal women.<sup>14</sup>

The unemployment rate for Aboriginal women is almost double that of women as a group. Essentially, the employment experiences of Aboriginal women show a pattern of high unemployment but a participation rate similar to the rest of Ontario's population. Also, the participation rate of Aboriginal women is significantly less than Aboriginal men. The low labour force participation rate of Aboriginal women compared with men shows the chronic unemployment conditions in many northern and rural Aboriginal communities. These communities are often isolated and far from any paid employment opportunities. Also, the limited access to education and training makes it difficult for Aboriginal women to get jobs. This is particularly true in rural settings and on reserves where employment opportunities are community-based and there are limited off-reserve job placements and relocations to urban areas.

Table 3: Occupational Profile

Aboriginal Population and Non-Aboriginal Population by Gender  
15 Years of Age and Older, Ontario 1986

Occupational Groups	Aboriginal		Non-Aboriginal	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Upper management	2.5	1.9	3.8	1.2
Middle management	8.5	10.4	11.8	9.5
Professional	9.5	13.8	13.1	17.0
Semi-prof. & technicians	4.4	6.1	4.1	4.9
Supervisory	2.2	4.0	3.0	4.0
Foremen/forewomen	5.1	0.9	5.3	0.8
Clerical	6.5	31.0	6.1	34.4
Sales	4.5	5.3	6.8	5.7
Service	5.1	9.3	4.4	6.7
Skilled crafts and trades	11.7	1.4	12.3	1.3
Semi-skilled manual	16.5	2.8	12.2	2.2
Other manual	20.2	9.5	14.9	10.3
Other occupations	3.3	3.6	2.2	2.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Statistics Canada 1986 Census (Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, *Ontario: A Diverse and Changing Society*; Ethnocultural Data Base Materials, Series III, Special Report No.5).

Like other designated group women, large numbers of Aboriginal women (31 per cent) work in the clerical field. However, 10 per cent of Aboriginal women are in middle-management, compared with 9.5 per cent of non-Aboriginal women. Thirteen per cent of Aboriginal women work in professional occupations compared with eight per cent of Aboriginal men. Table three reflects these statistics.

In 1986, the average annual income of Aboriginal peoples in Ontario 15 years of age and older was \$14,699 compared with \$19,283 for non-Aboriginal persons.<sup>15</sup> This low-income pattern is shared by Aboriginal women whose income is much less than Aboriginal men and non-Aboriginal women 15 years of age and older in Ontario's labour market. The average earnings for Aboriginal women in 1986 were \$10,855, compared with \$13,422 for non-Aboriginal women.<sup>16</sup> Table four shows the average earnings of

Aboriginal women and men compared with non-Aboriginal men and women.

The income data in this table refers to full-time workers, 15 years of age and over. It does not include part-time workers or income earned from traditional sources such as hunting, fishing and trapping. Incomes from these sources are very low, difficult to estimate, and add little to the average annual income of Aboriginal peoples.

It is evident from Table 4 that Aboriginal women consistently earn less than Aboriginal men in all job groups. Even in the clerical field, with significant numbers of Aboriginal women, Aboriginal men earn 29 per cent more.

Although more Aboriginal men and women are pursuing post-secondary education, there is still a wide gap between the percentage of Aboriginal people who have graduated from secondary school compared with the rest of the Ontario population. The 1986 census shows that: "51 per cent of the Aboriginal population has not graduated from secondary school" compared with 43

Table 4: Average Income by Occupation

Ontario 1986 (Full-time, full-year workers)

Occupational Groups	Aboriginal		Non-Aboriginal	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Upper management	42,108	31,878	63,332	35,361
Middle management	32,147	23,174	39,234	25,253
Professional	35,056	25,245	43,780	29,208
Semi-prof. & technicians	27,697	19,815	31,046	21,430
Supervisory	24,700	18,648	30,063	19,452
Foremen/forewomen	32,083	19,538	32,171	19,391
Clerical	23,085	17,907	24,296	18,154
Sales	26,510	16,292	30,592	17,993
Service	24,378	13,135	23,904	13,106
Skilled crafts and trades	28,389	22,471	27,629	16,884
Semi-skilled manual	25,089	17,391	25,745	16,873
Other manual	23,672	15,021	24,045	15,352
Other occupations	20,463	15,264	24,858	18,089

Source: 1986 Census, Statistics Canada. Distributed by: Ministry of Citizenship, Ethnocultural Data Base.

per cent for the rest of the population. Although almost one-quarter of Ontario's Aboriginal population have graduated from a post-secondary institution (compared with 28 per cent for the rest of the population), only five per cent have graduated from a university, compared with 11 per cent for the rest of the population.<sup>17</sup>

Table five shows the percentage of Aboriginal men and women in various occupational groups with a university degree. Figures are also shown for non-Aboriginal men and women.

## EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS

Aboriginal women experience many employment barriers including difficulty accessing training and development opportunities and negative stereotypes about their employability. Sometimes the employment barriers they face result from systemic or intentional forms of discrimination based on their gender or Aboriginal origins. Systemic discrimination is the application of workplace policies and practices that are not job-related or required for the safe and efficient operation of business. While such policies and practices may seem neutral, they can work to exclude. Examples of systemic discrimination that can work against Aboriginal women include requirements for lengthy work experience or for academic skills that are not job-related.

High rates of unemployment in many Aboriginal communities and patterns of seasonal employment can result in Aboriginal women not having lengthy employment histories. Also, opportunities for formal education and training are not always available for Aboriginal women living on reserves or in rural areas. Discrimination is encountered by Aboriginal women in the workplace in many forms. Rather than reacting to discrimination by confronting it, many Aboriginal women will simply walk away from their jobs. This results in a sporadic employment

Table 5:  
University Graduates by Occupation Ontario 1986

Occupational Groups	Aboriginal		% Non-Aboriginal	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
All occupations	8.8	9.7	17.1	14.3
Upper management	29.9	28.0	37.1	32.4
Middle management	18.6	17.6	26.7	20.9
Professional	46.8	34.1	65.6	46.1
Semi-prof. & technicians	14.0	13.0	17.9	18.2
Supervisory	7.1	1.8	11.3	7.1
Foremen/forewomen	4.0	0.0	4.2	5.3
Clerical	2.4	2.7	8.5	5.0
Sales	6.8	5.0	13.9	8.6
Service	3.0	3.3	4.1	2.6
Skilled crafts and trades	1.5	0.0	2.1	3.5
Semi-skilled manual	1.2	0.0	2.0	5.5
Other manual	0.5	1.2	1.5	0.9
Other occupations	2.3	7.5	13.9	13.8

Source: 1986 Census, Statistics Canada. Distributed by: Ministry of Citizenship, Ethnocultural Data Base.

record that can make it difficult to secure a good reference. Aboriginal women may respond to instances of sexual harassment and other problems in the workplace in the same way.<sup>18</sup>

Another employment barrier for Aboriginal women are cultural norms. "Because of different cultural norms, Aboriginal women may be seen as lacking sophisticated communication and social skills. In reality, the way they communicate and relate to people are simply different. For example, aggressive behavior is not valued in Aboriginal culture. As a result, co-workers may view Aboriginal women as aloof and unfriendly, while supervisors may see them as lacking potential for advancement and training."<sup>19</sup>

## BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS

### IMPLEMENTING AN EFFECTIVE EMPLOYMENT EQUITY PROGRAM CAN HELP INCREASE THE REPRESENTATION OF ABORIGINAL WOMEN.

Implementing an effective employment equity program can help increase the representation of Aboriginal women in the workplace. Employment equity is a results-oriented program that includes removing discriminatory barriers to ensure equality of opportunity in the workplace. Applying employment equity principles in the workplace enables Aboriginal women and other designated groups to more fully use their educational skills and employment experience. Earnings differences would also be corrected.

Employment equity measures can also help to increase the number of Aboriginal women in the workforce. Organizations can help improve the employment and workplace experiences of Aboriginal women by:

- analyzing recruitment, selection, training and promotion policies and practices to identify and remove any barriers against Aboriginal women;
- providing cross-cultural training to increase the understanding of and sensitivity to Aboriginal cultural norms;
- creating a workplace that is free from all forms of discrimination including sexual and racial harassment;
- involving employees in the implementation of an employment equity program.

To ensure that the workplace represents Ontario's changing and diverse population, organizations can expand their labour pool through outreach recruitment. Aboriginal organizations and media can be useful sources to recruit Aboriginal women. Also, organizations can take these steps to help ensure success in recruiting Aboriginal women:

- train managers and others involved in hiring in bias-free recruitment and selection practices;

- ensure that job requirements focus on work-related skills and qualifications;
- ensure that job selection interviews are culturally sensitive and that wherever possible, the selection team includes Aboriginal people;
- provide employee orientation sessions to new employees to inform them of the organization's culture and expectations;
- extend training and development and promotion opportunities to Aboriginal women.

Aboriginal women bring a broad range of skills and qualifications to the workplace. Tapping this valuable pool of talent benefits Aboriginal women, the organizations which employ them, and the economy of Ontario. Employment equity can help to make this happen.

## ENDNOTES

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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

### Aboriginal

(Aboriginal person/people)

A descendant of the original peoples of Canada.

### Bill C-31

An act to amend the Indian Act to provide first-time reinstatement or reinstatement to persons who lost or were denied status because of discriminatory elements of the Indian Act. (Persons with Bill C-31 status are considered status Indians.)

### Designated groups

Those groups (e.g., women, racial minorities, persons with disabilities, Aboriginal persons) who are the focus of employment equity because their labour market history reveals high rates of unemployment, lower than average pay rates, and concentration in a narrow range of occupations (e.g., clerical, sales and service).

### Employment equity

A comprehensive planning process used by an organization to ensure fair and equitable representation of designated groups at all levels of the organization.

### Ethnic origin

The ethnic or cultural group(s) Canadians belong to or identify with and the ancestral roots or origins of the population.

### First Nation

A term including all Aboriginal peoples. Many status Indian communities prefer the term "First Nation" to the term "Band" or "reserve."

### Indian (Indian person/people)

An Aboriginal person who is registered or entitled to be registered as an Indian under the terms of the Indian Act.

## LIST OF RESOURCE ORGANIZATIONS

**Anigáwncigig Institute of Peterborough**  
267 Stewart Street  
Peterborough, Ontario K9J 3M8  
(705) 748-1780

**Canada Employment Centres**  
(refer to blue pages of Bell Canada's telephone directory for addresses of local centres)

**Chiefs of Ontario**  
22 College Street, 2nd Floor  
Toronto, Ontario M5G 1K2  
(416) 972-0212

**Native Council**  
200-384 Bank Street  
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5V5  
(613) 238-8181

**Native Skills Centre**  
401 Richmond Street West  
Suite 384  
Toronto, Ontario M5V 1X3  
(416) 581-1392

**O.I. Personnel**  
20 Carlton Street, Suite 126  
Toronto, Ontario M5B 2H5  
(416) 591-6995

**Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres**  
234 Eglinton Avenue East  
Suite 207  
Toronto, Ontario M4P 1K5  
(416) 484-1411

**Ontario Metis Aboriginal Association (OMAA)**  
158 Sackville Road  
Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario  
P6B 4T6  
(705) 949-5161

**Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat**  
595 Bay Street, 10th Floor  
Suite 1009  
Toronto, Ontario M5G 2C2  
(416) 326-4740

**Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA)**  
117 North May Street  
Thunder Bay, Ontario P7C 3N8  
(807) 623-3442

### Indian Act

An act of the Parliament of Canada stating its legal control over "Indians and lands reserved for Indians," assigned in Section 91 (24) of the BNA Act.

### Inuit

An Aboriginal person who self-identifies as an Inuit person and is a descendant of the original inhabitants of the northern regions of Canada.

### Labour force

That portion of the population 15 years of age and over that are employed or actively seeking employment.

### Labour force participation rate

Represents the labour force as a percentage of the population 15 years of age and over. The participation rate for a particular group is that group's labour force expressed as a percentage of its population.

### Metis

A person who self-identifies as a Metis and is of mixed Indian and non-Indian ancestry.

### Native (Native person/people)

A descendent of the original peoples of Canada.

### Non-Aboriginal

Any person who is not an Aboriginal as defined by the previous definitions.

### Non-status Indian

A person of Aboriginal ancestry who does not meet or has not yet met the legal criteria for recognition as an Indian under the federal Indian Act. Many non-status Indians have sought reinstatement under Bill C-31. While thousands have been reinstated, thousands remain to be.

### Reserve

A tract of crown land set aside for the use and benefit of a band.

### Status Indian

An Indian who is registered as an Indian under the Indian Act.

### Systemic discrimination

The act of excluding members of certain groups by using employment policies or practices based on criteria that are not job-related nor required for the efficient running of the business.

### Workforce

Employees within an organization, as opposed to the "labour force" that consists of workers in the general population.

**\*This glossary of terms is from the following sources:**

*Economic Status of Native Women in Ontario*, Ontario Women's Directorate, (Toronto, Ontario), 1987.

*Employment Equity for Aboriginal Women*, Ontario Metis Aboriginal Association and Ontario Women's Directorate, (Toronto, Ontario), 1991.

*Ontario: A Diverse and Changing Society*, Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, (Toronto, Ontario), 1991.

### Affirmative Action: Technical Training Manual

Employment and Immigration Canada, Supply and Services Canada, 1985.

### For more information contact:

Ontario Women's Directorate  
Consultative Services Branch  
(416) 314-0300.

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# Women with Disabilities

## INTRODUCTION

This profile discusses some social and economic factors influencing the employment status of women with disabilities in Ontario's labour force. Information about the labour force participation, occupational representation, education and earnings of women with disabilities are included in this profile. The employment barriers that women with disabilities face and suggested corrective measures are also included.

Persons with disabilities are persons "who have any persistent physical, mental, psychiatric, sensory or learning impairment; consider themselves to be, or believe that a potential employer would consider them to be disadvantaged in employment because of an impairment."<sup>1</sup>

(For an explanation of some of the terms used in this profile, see the Glossary of Terms, page 7.)

Data for this profile came from a variety of sources. The primary sources for this data were the 1986 census of Canada, the Ministry of Citizenship Ethnocultural Data Base, and the *Statistical Profile of Disabled Persons in Ontario*, (Volume II) from the Office for Disability Issues. Wherever possible, data are included to compare persons with disabilities with men and women in the Ontario population. Data are used to compare the social and economic status of these groups in Ontario's labour force only and are not intended to create an ideal model for women with disabilities.

Detailed data on the status of women with disabilities are difficult to obtain. Available labour force data do not always provide the detail and range to make comparisons between men and women. However, the statistics used in this profile do show the

employment status of women with disabilities in Ontario's labour force.

## WOMEN IN ONTARIO'S LABOUR FORCE

Women make up 51 per cent of Ontario's population. In 1986, there were 4,633,900 women in Ontario and 4,467,795 men.<sup>2</sup> Women are increasingly participating in the paid labour force. In 1975, for example, only 48 per cent of all women over age 15 were working outside the home. By 1986, the percentage of women over 15 who were working had reached 59 per cent.<sup>3</sup>

If current trends continue, women are expected to total 50 per cent of the labour force by the year 2000. Also, Ontario's diverse population, with men and women from over 100 ethnic and racial backgrounds, is beginning to be reflected in the workplace.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the strong participation of women in the labour force, there are still many barriers to women's equality in the workplace. Employment barriers have caused women to be concentrated in a narrow range of occupations, such as clerical, retail sales and service jobs, which contribute to their lower earnings. In 1986, women earned, on average, 65 cents to every dollar earned by a man. Bridging this wage gap has been very slow. Income data show that in 1989 "women in Ontario earned on average 67 per cent of men's earnings."<sup>5</sup> In other words, for every dollar a man earned, a woman working the same number of hours earned 67 cents.

## WOMEN IN THE LABOUR MARKET

## WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

In 1986, an estimated 14 per cent of the Ontario population, or 1,263,000 persons, had some type of disability. The vast majority (92 per cent) of these individuals were 15 years of age or more and lived in households rather than in institutions.<sup>9</sup>

The *Statistical Profile of Disabled Persons in Ontario* lists these types of disabilities:

- **mobility:** limited ability to move without the use of a wheelchair or to stand for long periods;
- **visual impairment:** limited ability to read ordinary newsprint;
- **hearing impairment:** limited ability to hear what is being said in a conversation with another person;
- **speech impairment:** limited ability to speak and be understood.

Other disabilities include learning disabilities and emotional or psychiatric disabilities.

A Statistics Canada 1985 Health and Activity Limitations survey (HALS) found that: "disease was the most common form of disability reported by non-institutionalized respondents, and by those over 50 years of age. Among those under 50, the most common cause was an accident."<sup>10</sup> The number of women who reported that their disabilities

were the result of a disease or an accident was significantly lower than men. "Thirty-six per cent of male respondents, but only 25 per cent of female respondents, attributed their disabilities to disease, while 21 per cent of men and only 14 per cent of women said their disabilities resulted from accidents."<sup>11</sup> In Ontario, the HAL survey included 10,275 adults living in households and 10,138 persons living in institutions.

The HAL survey reported that the number of men and women with disabilities in the 15-64 age groups was almost equal. Men represented 55 per cent while women represented 51 per cent. Similarly, in the 65 and over age group, women with disabilities represented 49 per cent compared to 45 per cent for men.<sup>12</sup>

One in 15 women in Ontario is disabled.<sup>13</sup> Often, the way their disability affects their lives is determined by how society reacts to their disability. A person with a disability need not be disadvantaged. Of the respondents in the HAL survey, "half of those respondents with jobs believed their chances for career advancement were fair to poor, while the other half believed that they were good to excellent."<sup>14</sup> The following tables show the employment status of persons with disabilities compared with non-disabled men and women in Ontario's labour force.

The labour force participation rate of women with disabilities is especially low at 39 per cent compared with 59 per cent for both men and women. Similarly, the HAL survey showed that "the likelihood of being employed was strongly related to the severity of a respondent's disability."<sup>15</sup> Persons with "mild" disabilities were most likely to be employed while those with severe disabilities were least likely to be employed. The unemployment rate for women with disabilities is considerably higher than it is for women as a group.

Table 2, which follows, shows the number of women and men with disabilities in various occupational categories.

Table 1:  
Labour Force Activity 1986 (workers 15 years +)

	% Persons with Disabilities				Ontario Population	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
<b>Labour Force</b>						
Employed	59	39	79	59		
Not in the Labour Force	40	60	20	40		
Unemployment Rate	11	15	5	8		

Source: 1986 Census, Statistics Canada/Ministry of Citizenship Ethnocultural Data Base.

Table 2:  
Occupational Distribution Ontario 1986

Occupational Group	% Persons with Disabilities	
	Men	Women
Professional, Upper middle managers	13	12
Semi-professionals and supervisors	15	11
Clerical	6	33
Sales	10	7
Service	5	—
Skilled crafts and trades	15	11
Semi-skilled manual	14	8
Other manual workers	19	13
Not stated	3	5

**Source:** Ministry of Citizenship/Office for Disabled Persons, *Statistical Profile of Disabled Persons in Ontario, Volume II*, p.16.

These data show that a large number (33 per cent) of women with disabilities in the labour force work in the clerical field.

The income level of persons with disabilities is low compared with non-disabled Ontarians. The Health and Activity Limitations survey confirmed these findings. Survey respondents between age 15 and 64 had gross incomes that were 46 per cent lower than non-disabled Ontarians within the same age group.<sup>13</sup> HALS noted that the incomes of respondents would have been lower except that one in four (26 per cent) of those between ages 15 and 64 received some type of pension or benefits. The HAL survey also showed that:

- "One-half of all disabled women (and more than 60 per cent of those unable to work) received 1985 incomes of less than \$5,000. Only four per cent of all women with disabilities had incomes of \$30,000 or more."<sup>14</sup>
- The average annual income for women with disabilities in 1985 was \$7,700; those not limited\* had \$9,400; those who

were limited but able to work had incomes of \$9,700 on average; and those completely unable to work reported average incomes of \$4,800.<sup>15</sup>

- For disabled men, the average 1985 income was \$17,900; those who were not limited had average incomes of \$22,000; those limited but able to work had an average income of \$18,200; and those who were completely unable to work received an average income of \$13,100.<sup>16</sup>

Disability and gender appear to contribute to the lower average income levels of women with disabilities.

Disability also affects the level of education and training persons with disabilities are able to receive. Twenty-one per cent of respondents said their education was interrupted for lengthy periods, while equal numbers said they had to change schools or courses because of their disabilities. An additional six per cent said that they had started school later than most non-disabled children.<sup>17</sup> The educational levels of persons with disabilities compared with the rest of Ontario's population are reflected in Table 3.

Table 3:  
Educational Levels Ontario 1986

	% Persons with Disabilities		Ontario Population
Less than grade 9	23	14	
Grades 9-13	42	28	
Some post-secondary	27	44	
University certificate diploma or degree	6	12	

**Source:** 1986 Census, Statistics Canada/Ministry of Citizenship Ethnocultural Data Base.

\* "limited" refers to persons restricted in the kind or amount of activity they could perform at home, work, school or leisure activities because of a long-term physical and/or developmental disability

  
**DISABILITY AND  
GENDER APPEAR  
TO CONTRIBUTE  
TO THE LOWER  
AVERAGE  
INCOME LEVELS  
OF WOMEN  
WITH  
DISABILITIES.**

## EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS

**E**qual access to available job opportunities is limited for persons with disabilities for many reasons. Barriers can include inaccessible work sites, washroom or cafeteria areas, which present problems for wheelchair users. Lack of adequate transportation to the workplace is also a barrier for persons with disabilities. In the Health and Activity Limitations survey, 16 per cent of respondents said they had trouble using regular public transit vehicles. Another common problem was difficulty using public transit.<sup>17</sup>

Another major employment barrier for persons with disabilities is the biased attitudes of employers and co-workers. Biased attitudes include false assumptions about what persons with disabilities are capable of doing. The disability becomes the focus, rather than the person and their skills. Not understanding the causes of some disabilities, such as epilepsy, can also contribute to the fear some organizations have about hiring persons with disabilities.

The Health and Activity Limitations survey also found that the severity of the disability influenced the employment chances of persons with disabilities. "Of those respondents with jobs who believed they had been refused employment opportunities because of their disabilities, 29 per cent were mildly disabled, 60 per cent were moderately disabled, and 11 per cent were severely disabled."<sup>18</sup>

## ELIMINATING EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS

**W**omen with disabilities should be considered on their own merit. Like non-disabled workers, they possess a range of job skills and should be given every opportunity to participate fully in Ontario's labour force. Women with disabilities do not seek special privileges in the workplace. What they need is access to existing training

opportunities so they can add to the marketable skills they have:

Inaccessible work sites can be made accessible with the addition of a ramp or raising a desk for wheelchair users. Technical aids (such as specially programmed computers and braille writers for people who are blind or have low vision, and telephone amplifiers for people who are hard of hearing) can help women with disabilities compete more successfully for available jobs. These technical aids are examples of how women with disabilities can be accommodated in the workplace.

Workplace accommodation can also include flexible job design, flexible working hours, and support services such as sign language interpreters for the Deaf.

Accommodating the needs of persons with disabilities in the workplace is a legal requirement of the Ontario Human Rights Code. "The code requires accommodation from providers of services, goods, facilities and housing, employers, trade unions, trade or occupational associations, and self-governing professions."<sup>19</sup> The *Guidelines for Assessing Accommodation Requirements for Persons with Disabilities* was published by the Ontario Human Rights Commission. It explains in detail what accommodating the needs of persons with disabilities means.

Workplace training sessions can help to overcome attitudinal barriers and promote understanding of the special needs of disabled women.

Implementing an effective employment equity program can help organizations, such as employers and unions, eliminate workplace barriers against women with disabilities. Employment equity is a results-oriented program that includes removing discriminatory barriers to ensure equality of opportunity. Applying employment equity practices in the workplace enables women with disabilities and other designated group women to use their educational skills and employment experience more fully. Earnings differences would also be corrected.

THE DISABILITY  
BECOMES THE  
FOCUS, RATHER  
THAN THE  
PERSON AND  
THEIR SKILLS.

Employment equity can also help to increase the number of women with disabilities in the workplace. Organizations can improve the employment and workplace experience of women with disabilities by:

- analysing recruitment, selection, training and promotion policies and practices to identify and remove any barriers against women with disabilities;
- providing training to address the fears and concerns of management and employees about hiring persons with disabilities;
- creating a workplace that is free from all forms of discrimination and harassment against persons with disabilities;
- involving women with disabilities and other employees in the implementation of an employment equity program;
- conducting a physical demands analysis of the jobs in the organization to determine what physical demands are required to do the job and whether required demands have unnecessary physical standards that would have a negative impact on women with disabilities.

To ensure that the workplace represents Ontario's changing and diverse population, organizations can expand their labour pool through outreach recruitment. Organizations which serve the needs of persons with disabilities, as well as job-related publications or newspapers, can be useful sources to recruit women with disabilities. Also, organizations can take these steps to help ensure success in recruiting women with disabilities:

- treat women with disabilities with the same respect you treat other employees;
- include persons with disabilities in the recruitment and selection process. (See the List of Resource Organizations for outreach assistance.);
- ask women with disabilities how the organization can best accommodate their special needs;

- ensure that the work site is barrier-free by asking the person with disabilities if special accommodations are required (such as installing ramps, if necessary); ensuring that washrooms and elevators are accessible to wheelchair users; consulting with specialists in the field of barrier-free building/office designs;
- provide parking spaces for persons with disabilities as close as possible to the work site. These spaces should be wider than normal to enable a wheelchair user to comfortably unfold the wheelchair;
- train managers and others involved in hiring in bias-free recruitment and selection practices;
- ensure that job requirements focus on work-related skills and qualifications;
- provide employee orientation sessions to new employees to inform them of the organization's culture and expectations;
- extend training and development and promotion opportunities to women with disabilities.

To broaden the employment skills and accelerate the advancement of women with disabilities in the workplace, organizations can:

- use job bridging techniques or create bridging positions to help women with disabilities advance from job ghettos or from one occupational group to another; for example, from a junior secretarial job to an administrative position;
- set up special on-the-job-training initiatives for women with disabilities.

Women with disabilities bring a broad range of skills and qualifications to the workplace. Tapping this valuable pool of talent benefits women with disabilities, the organizations who employ them, and the economy of Ontario. Employment equity can help to make this happen.



## WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES BRING A BROAD RANGE OF SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS TO THE WORKPLACE.

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14. Ministry of Treasury and Economics/ Statistics Canada: The Health and Activity Limitations Survey, (1986-87).
15. Ibid.
16. Ministry of Citizenship/Office for Disabled Persons, op.cit., p. 13.
17. Ibid, p. 21.
18. Ibid, p. 17.
19. Ontario Human Rights Commission, *Guidelines for Assessing Accommodation Requirements for Persons with Disabilities*, 1989, p.1.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS\*

### Credentialism

The use of job requirements such as diplomas, university degrees, training certificates, and other forms not justified by the requirements of the job.

### Designated groups

Those groups (e.g., women, racial minorities, persons with disabilities, Aboriginal persons) who are the focus of employment equity because their labour market history reveals high rates of unemployment, lower than average pay rates, and concentration in a narrow range of occupations (e.g., clerical, sales and service).

### Employment equity

A comprehensive planning process used by an organization to ensure fair and equitable representation of designated groups at all levels of the organization.

### Labour force

That portion of the population 15 years of age and over whom are employed or actively seeking employment.

### Labour force participation rate

Represents the labour force as a percentage of the population 15 years of age and over. The participation rate for a particular group is that group's labour force expressed as a percentage of its population.

### Persons with disabilities

Persons who have any persistent physical, psychiatric, sensory or learning impairment.

### Racial minority

Refers to persons who are visibly different from the dominant group, and are non-white and or non-Caucasian in race. The term racial minority is also used interchangeably with the term visible minority, defined as "persons who are, because of their race or color, a visible minority in Canada." Racial minorities include the following groups: Black, Chinese, Indo-Pakistani, Japanese, Korean, Latin American, Pacific Islander, South Asian, and West Asian and Arab.

### Systemic discrimination

The act of excluding members of certain groups by using employment policies or practices based on criteria that are not job-related nor required for the efficient running of the business.

### Workforce

Employees within an organization, as opposed to the "labour force" which consists of workers in the general population.

\* This glossary of terms is from the following sources:

*Ontario: A Diverse and Changing Society,*

Ontario Ministry of Citizenship,  
(Toronto, Ontario), 1991.

*Affirmative Action: Technical Training*

*Manual*, Employment and Immigration Canada, Supply and Services Canada, Ottawa, 1985.

## LIST OF RESOURCE ORGANIZATIONS\*\*

**BOOST (Blind of Ontario Organized with Self-help Tactics)**

517 College Street, Suite 208  
Toronto, Ontario  
M6G 4A2  
(416) 964-6838

**Canada Employment Centres:** See listing of addresses in the blue pages of the telephone directory.

**Canadian Hearing Society**

271 Spadina Road  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5R 2V3  
(416) 964-9595

**Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)**

Ontario Division  
1929 Bayview Avenue  
Toronto, Ontario  
M4G 3E8  
(416) 486-2500

**Centre for Disability and Work**

400 University Avenue, 10th Floor  
Toronto, Ontario  
M7A 1T7  
Telephone: (416) 326-7810

**Epilepsy Ontario**

5385 Yonge Street, Suite 207  
North York, Ontario  
M2N 5R7  
(416) 229-2291

**Ministry of Community and Social Services**

General Inquiry, Vocational Rehabilitation Services  
2195 Yonge Street, 8th Floor  
Toronto, Ontario  
M7A 1G1  
(416) 325-0500

**Office for Disability Issues**

700 Bay Street, Suite 201  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5G 1Z6  
Telephone: (416) 326-0111

**Workers' Compensation Board (WCB)**

2 Bloor Street East  
Toronto, Ontario  
M4W 3C3  
(416) 927-9555

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**For more information contact:**

Ontario Women's Directorate  
Consultative Services Branch  
(416) 314-0300.

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\*\* This is a partial list of organizations serving the needs of persons with disabilities. These organizations can be consulted for advice and assistance about employing persons with disabilities.



